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SOME SUGGESTIONS AS TO THE DATE OF THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

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Many dates have been suggested for the writing of Galatians, ranging from immediately following the first missionary journey to the close of the third journey. Some apparent disagreements between the letter and Acts have not only made it difficult to date the letter, but have been the basis for discrediting either the Epistle or the Acts. This discussion is based entirely on the South Galatian theory. If that theory is not satisfactorily established, this argument falls. If this argument holds, it will help establish the South Galatian theory.

Let us take up the data in order of definiteness.

1. *How many times had Paul visited the Galatian churches?*—a) Gal. 4:13 states, “because of an infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you the first time.” This is usually taken to mean that Paul had made two visits and only two. Perhaps the word “former” or “first” cannot be pressed that far, but is to be understood adverbially—“formerly.” On the first missionary journey Paul and Barnabas stopped in Galatia, first at Antioch, where they staid a few weeks (Acts 13:13-52), Iconium, where they “tarried a long time” (14:3), Lystra and Derbe, staying long enough in each to establish a church “making many disciples” (14:21), “so that the word was spread abroad through all that region” (13:49). There followed a return visit

to each church, “confirming,” “praying with fasting,” and appointing elders in every church (14:21-24) before going home to Antioch. When Paul speaks of “the first visit,” does he mean to group these two together? If so, Galatians must have been written after the second journey. But we may likewise date the letter after the second visit on the first journey.

b) This “former visit” came about “because of an infirmity of the flesh.” Perhaps this phrase can determine which visit could be indicated. Acts gives no data on this point, unless John Mark’s leaving the company at Perga may suggest that he was not well enough to go on, and perhaps all three missionaries were in poor health. And the district is infested with malaria, according to Professor Ramsey. We have, however, a suggestion in II Corinthians of a “thorn in the flesh” (12:7) which Paul says was given him as a buffet immediately(?) after a vision which came to him “fourteen years ago” (12:2). II Corinthians is pretty definitely dated in the year 57 or 58. We may presume, then, that the “thorn” came to Paul about the year 44 or 45. This may be a little early for the first journey, but it assures us that Paul’s health was not perfect at that time. This is Professor Ramsey’s suggestion. It would make it seem more probable that “the former visit” refers to the “first” visit

direct from the malarial plains of Pamphylia.

c) The letter was written apparently within a short time after his visit, since he says (1:6), "I marvel that ye are so quickly removing." Can this mean that the Galatians had been Christians but a short time? He wishes he could be with them (4:20) but he makes no suggestion of any possibility of an immediate visit.

2. *Paul's trips to Jerusalem (Gal. 1:17—2:1).*—a) This section is written after two trips and only two. If he leaves out any trip his argument is destroyed, and "before God, I lie not" shows how serious he is. Peter and James the Lord's brother were the only ones he had seen among the Jerusalem leaders before the Council. Even if, as Lightfoot and Hort have maintained, the apostles had not been present on the trip carrying alms reported in Acts (11:27 ff.)—the gift was delivered to "the elders"—yet to be perfectly honest Paul must have stated that fact. Galatians must have been written before that visit.

b) Professor McGiffert has suggested that the offering was taken at the time Paul went to the Council. But Gal. 2:10 states that the apostles requested "that we should remember the poor; which very thing I was also anxious to do." If a gift was brought at that time, what does this verse mean? Paul does not suggest that he had ever done any such thing, but that he was then *anxious* to do so. If at some previous time he had brought a contribution which was delivered to the elders it would seem natural for some reference to be made to it at this point by adding some phrase like "as I had previously done." And

it would hardly be polite for the apostles not to refer to it in requesting that the poor be remembered. Galatians could not have been written after the Antioch gift.

c) Paul's trip to Jerusalem to carry alms from Antioch, as related in Acts 11:27-30; 12:25, is not in its proper historical setting. The famine which it suggests did not come till after the death of Herod, related in Acts, chap. 12. Judaea was supplying food to Tyre and Sidon (Acts 12:20). Herod died in 44 A.D. Fadus became procurator, and later Tiberius Alexander, who came into office in the year Herod of Chalis died, i.e., 48 A.D. Josephus writes (*Ant.*, XX, cv, sec. 2): "Then came Tiberius Alexander as successor to Fadus . . . under these procurators that great famine happened in Judaea. . . ." And details of relief work are recorded in the second chapter of the same book. This makes the famine take place in the years 45-48, or after the dates frequently assigned to Paul's first missionary journey (45-47). Can it be possible that Galatians was written after the first journey and yet before the contribution of the Antioch church to the poor of Judaea?

d) In I Cor. 16:1 Paul states that he gave an order to the Galatian churches to make a systematic contribution for the saints in Judaea. When did he give this order? It must have been after Galatians was written or else he would have referred to it in this connection, adding to "as I was also anxious to do," "as you know," or "as I have commanded you." There was no plan for a general contribution from the Galatian churches when the letter was

written. Whenever II Cor., chaps. 8 and 9, were written, we know that Macedonia had been prepared for a year, and Corinth had begun a year before. The notice in I Cor., chap. 16, does not read as if it were the first indication of a general collection, but rather a practical suggestion for carrying out a plan previously suggested. Galatians could not have been written, therefore, after that collection was planned, which was announced, in all probability, to the Galatian churches on the third journey, i.e., in 53 or 54 A.D.

e) Perhaps some later famine than that in 45-48 was the cause of the contribution from the Antioch church, but no excuse appears for considering it so. After the first journey Paul did not travel with Barnabas so far as we know, and he refused to take Mark on the second journey. Yet when this contribution was made Barnabas went with him, and they came back together, bringing John Mark with them (Acts 12:25). This would suggest that the contribution from Antioch was delivered before the second journey, but after Galatians was written. Is this possible?

Let us suppose that the first journey took place in the years 45-47, Mark having left them at Perga in 46 and returned to Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch in 47 and find the prophet Agabus telling of the famine in Judaea (Acts 11:28). Paul becomes anxious to send some relief, but before he can do so he is called to Jerusalem for the visit related in Gal., chap. 2 (48 A.D.), and there promises to send help, which is delivered to "the elders"

a few months afterward (still during the "famine under Claudius"), and returns, bringing Mark with him. Upon his arrival at Antioch from the Council meeting, and before the relief is taken, he learns that the same difficulty met with at Antioch had also affected the Galatian churches, and so Galatians is written. Is it possible to fit in other questions with this suggestion?

3. *The Council at Jerusalem (Gal. 2:1-10; Acts 15:1-29).*—a) Are these accounts of the same council? The agreements and differences are both very significant, and have been the basis of much discussion. Was Galatians written before or after the council related in Acts, chap. 15? The greatest difficulty is with the statement of Acts that the council, which was public, decided the question of circumcision in Paul's favor and sent letters unto "the churches of Antioch, Cilicia, and Syria" indorsing Paul. Why does not Paul quote this decision, particularly if we are to accept the version suggested by Western texts leaving no ceremonial matter, but simply the three great moral obligations to avoid idolatry, murder, and immorality?¹ As long as this decree was available there was no more basis for argument. The whole problem of Galatians was settled once for all. There was no more trouble at Jerusalem over the matter, although the Jewish Christians continued to be "zealous for the law" (Acts 21:20). It was the Jews from Asia (Acts 21:27), not the Christians, who made trouble for Paul on his last trip to Jerusalem. The difficulty when I Corinthians was written was entirely different, i.e., the interpretation of "what is idolatry."

¹ See *Biblical World*, November, 1912.

b) The first we hear of Silas is in connection with the decision of the Council at Jerusalem. He was chosen, with one Judas, to carry the decree to the churches and "tell them the same things by word of mouth." These men spent "some time" at Antioch (Acts 15:33), and when Paul started on his second journey he took Silas with him. This journey, as all the others, began with a revisit of the churches of Syria, Cilicia, and Galatia. Silas had been commissioned to read the Decree to the churches of Syria and Cilicia, and commend Paul by word of mouth. If Galatians was written after this journey, how can we account for no reference to the Decree or to Silas? Would Paul, traveling with the one delegated for that very work, neglect to have the Decree published and the question which caused it explained (Acts 16:4)? And if he did explain it, why is the letter to the Galatians necessary? Or, at least, why does he not remind them that he has told them before? He is constantly referring to his teaching, but implies that he had not felt it necessary to treat particularly of this subject. Could that be possible after the Council at Jerusalem (as recorded in Acts), after the publication of the Apostolic Decree, and after visiting the churches in company with Silas? And there is absolutely no reference to Silas at all. Silas shares in the greeting in Thessalonians and frequently elsewhere, but why not in Galatians?

c) The occasion of the Council at Jerusalem was the teaching of "certain men" who came from Judaea (Acts 15:1) without commandment (vs. 24), demanding that gentile Christians should

be circumcised. Therefore, Paul, Barnabas, and others (Acts), among them Titus (unknown to the Galatian churches, as Paul must explain that he was a Greek [Gal. 2:3]), who became the test case, took a journey to Jerusalem "by revelation." A conference was held "privately" (Gal. 2:2) which decided in Paul's favor. The right hand of fellowship was given to Paul and Barnabas as apostles unto the Gentiles. Perhaps this was a public recognition of their work, but the conference was private.

This question was also the occasion of the letter to the Galatians, which breathes of the intensity of a recent disagreement. There is, however, no mention of Timothy. If it was written after the second journey, Timothy would certainly be a test case. Paul circumcised him himself "because of the Jews," for all knew his father was a Greek, and he was well known among the churches of Galatia (Acts 16:2 ff.). The Decree of the apostles was delivered as they went through the cities (Acts 16:4). But now (if Galatians was written after the second journey) in writing upon that very subject, not only is no reference made to the decrees at all, but no reference is made to Timothy at all. In the Thessalonians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, and II Corinthians, Timothy shares in the greeting. In Romans he sends salutation, although Paul has to explain "he is my fellow-worker." He appears also in I Corinthians, and only Ephesians (which mentions no one except the bearer of the letter) and Galatians are silent concerning him. And of all places where a greeting from Timothy would be appropriate, or at least some reference to his whereabouts,

his health, or faith, the letter to the very churches who commended him does not mention his name.

If Paul was to be honest with his argument he must defend the circumcision of Timothy, and he must refer to the Apostolic Decree, especially after writing, "if ye receive circumcision," etc. (Gal. 5:2). How, then, would he dare circumcise Timothy on his second journey? He was there in person to defend and explain. The principle of Christian liberty once established then love controls its application. "We use not our right. We become all things to all men. To those under law, as under law, that we may save those under the law." Even if the decree included some ceremonial matter, as indicated in the four-clause interpretation of the accepted text, so that Paul did not approve of it, how could he, after Silas had published it, expect any hearing on the subject involved without referring to it? Is Paul dishonest in his argument?

d) Paul gives a definite date for his second trip to Jerusalem. It is "after fourteen years." Whether this is to be counted from his conversion or from his former trip to Jerusalem it is impossible to determine. If we can trust the date to be given to his conversion by the Aretas incident (II Cor. 11:32) about 34, then this conference may have taken place in 48, the date we have noticed above as the last year of the famine "under Claudius" and the year the first missionary journey may have been completed. The famine in Judaea would naturally cause a scattering of the Christians, some of whom came to Antioch and objected to the uncircumcised Christians being admitted to full fellowship.

Paul and Barnabas on their return from the first journey found this situation and hurried to straighten out things by the conference at Jerusalem, before Paul had time to take an offering for the poor, although anxious to do so. Paul and Barnabas returned from this conference to Antioch, probably overland, preaching the conversion of the Gentiles in Phoenicia and Samaria (Acts 15:3). At least we cannot think that Paul would have publicly preached this gospel on the way down, when he was going to learn whether he was "running, or had run in vain" (Gal. 2:2), stirring up antagonism and laying himself open to a charge of bad faith. But since the conference had been private, no doubt there were many who now heard the gentile missionaries with suspicion.

Arrived at Antioch, Paul learned that the Galatian churches had suffered from this famine-driven diffusion of Judaistic Christians as well as Syria, and hastened to write the letter to the Galatians to offset it. This would date the letter in the year 48 A.D.

e) But what of the Decree as Acts reports it? Is Acts to be discredited? Were there no such decrees? Or did Luke insert some spurious source at this point? It is not necessary to make any such conclusion. After the private conference, Paul's open preaching raised so much objection that "there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees who believed, saying, It is needful to circumcise them" (Acts 15:5). "And when there had been much questioning, Peter rose up" and defended Paul's preaching, and rehearsed the story of the success of the gentile mission of Paul and Barnabas (15:7-12). "Then

it seemed good to the apostles" to write the Decree and send Silas and Judas with it to the churches of Syria and Cilicia. They followed Paul and Barnabas to Antioch, and Silas went on with Paul to the churches of Syria and Cilicia (15:40, 41) to deliver the Decree (16:4). This was after Galatians had been written. It would be easy to confuse the report of the private conference and the public council which came very soon afterward. It may be possible that Paul and Barnabas took another trip to Jerusalem for the public council and that they at that time took the offering to the Judaean brethren from Antioch, and this helped to bring about a sympathetic feeling. It is certain that the gift from Antioch was carried after the private conference described in Gal., chap. 2.

f) Another hint of this is to be found in the story of Paul's last visit to Jerusalem (Acts 21:17-26). This time he comes bringing the great contribution of the gentile churches, yet no mention of the receipt of it or any gratitude or distribution is given. Luke was in the party, an eyewitness to the reception given Paul. At least the passage closes one of the "we" sections which began in Acts 20.

We find Luke again in the party in Acts 27:1, and a hint that he visited Paul in Acts 24:23, without any indication that he was not continually as near his hero as possible. In the greeting to Paul extended by James we find him adding, "But as touching the Gentiles, we wrote giving judgment that," and the Decree of the Council follows word for word (except for a different introductory verb) (Acts 21:25).

Why should this be repeated in this place? Perhaps for literary effect it is brought in to show that the suggestion of Paul's purification was not compromising him. But why not refer to it without putting it into the mouth of the speaker, or refer to it indirectly, as "You know our decree; well, for love's sake we suggest—" Can it be that Luke heard the Decree from the mouth of James, and that this was the first chance which James had to tell Paul in person of the final result of the Council? If Paul had not been present in person when the Decree was ordered written and had not met James since, it would be very natural for James to speak in this way. And if we are to agree with Lightfoot and Hort that when the Antioch relief was brought it was delivered to the elders without necessarily a meeting with the apostles, this is certainly the first opportunity for James to speak to Paul in person concerning his decree.

4. *Peter's visit to Antioch* (Gal. 2:11 ff.).—a) Is this a different Peter from the man who defended Paul in the Council, gave Paul the hand of fellowship in the private conference, and saw the vision of the sheet with the voice "what God has cleansed call not thou common"? Paul's first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion was to see Peter (Gal. 1:18). And here there is perfect concord until "certain from James" came and made a dissimulation which even carried away Barnabas. Peter had eaten with Gentiles in Judaea and had been forced to defend himself (Acts 11:2). And there immediately follows in Acts an account of preaching to Gentiles at Antioch and the misplaced

account of relief sent to the Judaean poor. It is a little improbable that an "Italian band" (Acts 10:1) would be stationed at Caesarea during the independent reign of Herod (Agrippa) (41-44 A.D.). And perhaps the Cornelius incident is also misplaced and belongs with the famine story after the description of the persecution under Herod (Acts 12:1-24). If so, we can understand how Peter might well withdraw from the gentile Christians when "certain come from James." Indeed these "certain from James" (Gal. 2:12) of the Peter incident sound much like the "certain that went out from us" of the Decree (Acts 15:24) and the "certain men" who "came down from Judaea" (Acts 15:1) with which the occasion of the calling of the Council is introduced, and the "some who trouble you and would pervert the gospel" (Gal. 1:7) which becomes the occasion of the letter. Can it be that all these men are the evidence of a scattering of the Judaean Christians due to the prolonging of the famine of 45-48?

b) It is impossible to date Peter's visit to Antioch precisely. To be sure, Paul has been following the chronological order before he mentions the incident, but the wording is indefinite in itself. If Peter has already given Paul the hand of fellowship, recognizing him as "the apostle to the Gentiles" and himself as sent to the circumcision, what business has he visiting the gentile church at Antioch? Could "certain from James" mislead Peter soon after the Council at Jerusalem where he had defended the open policy? If the Decree had been written, how could Barnabas and Peter and "all the Jews" be carried away by these unauthorized messengers?

What was the sequel to this misunderstanding? Did it continue as a permanent break? There is no evidence of such a thing. Did Peter give in and admit his fault? We do not know. Paul's argument to Peter becomes Paul's argument to the Galatians and there is no reason to give the sequel. But if we can suppose that Peter's visit came before the conference and the "certain from James" may be compared with "the false brethren privily brought in" of Gal. 2:4, then Peter's visit becomes one of the incidents leading up to the Council, and we find the sequel in the fact that Peter was persuaded of Paul's position, perhaps had an experience of his own which confirmed it (the Cornelius incident), and at the conference and Council took Paul's side, giving him the hand of fellowship as appointed to go to the uncircumcised. Paul in writing Galatians starts to deal with the conference at Jerusalem without giving the full story of the occasion of it and picks that up again as a convenient way of entering directly into his argument.

c) It is interesting to notice, in this connection, that we have here, then, the first suggestion of how Peter's name got to be connected with the party of Judaizers, and where Paul and Barnabas began to disagree. Barnabas and Paul do not travel together hereafter, except for the trip to the conference and when carrying relief from Antioch during the famine. Perhaps Mark shared Barnabas' fears that Paul was opening the way to license with his doctrine of liberty.

d) It is self-evident that Galatians was written in a time, or shortly after a time, of controversy: "Why am I still persecuted?" (5:11); "I wish they

would mutilate themselves" (5:12); "If ye bite and devour one another" (5:15); "Henceforth let no man trouble me" (6:17).

5. Lightfoot has worked out in detail the remarkable likeness of Galatians to the Epistle to the Romans. Romans seems almost to quote Galatians in such passages as Rom. 3:20 (cf. Gal. 2:16), "Because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified"; Rom. 7:4 (cf. Gal. 2:19), "Dead unto the law"; Rom. 8:15 (cf. Gal. 4:6), "Abba, Father"; Rom. 9:8 (cf. Gal. 4:28), "Children of the promise." The conclusion is that Romans and Galatians must have been written at the same time or within a short period. But would it not be just as probable that after meeting the problem of Christian freedom again at Corinth, Paul may have reviewed, if not the letter itself, at least the line of thought of Galatians? Many a writer drops for a few years a line of thought, to pick up, when occasion suggests, an old manuscript, and, re-reading, be fired with the force of his previous thinking.

It is also suggested that the unlikeness of Galatians to the Thessalonian letters argues against its early date. But the situation in Macedonia called for no controversy. Paul had met the situation in Galatia, had the Decree with him, could forewarn the Thessalonians, and naturally another spirit is evident. This in itself cannot be used in the face of other facts.

Summary

To summarize this discussion, then, we have suggested the following chronology:

The first missionary journey is to be dated about 45-47.

On the way out Mark leaves and goes to Jerusalem. 46.

Paul and Barnabas make a second visitation of the Galatian churches on their way home to Antioch. 47.

On their return they find Agabus prophesying the continuation of the famine in Judaea. Paul hopes to send relief. 47.

Peter comes to Antioch (47-48) and is followed by Judaean Christians scattering because of the famine of 45-48.

Paul pleads for an open reception of Gentiles, and Peter and Barnabas hesitate to follow him in the face of the increasing Jewish influence. Peter returns to Judaea and is forced to defend himself for eating with Gentiles. The Cornelius incident, which came either just before or after his visit to Antioch, furnishes his answer. 48.

A test case is made of Titus, and Paul in a private conference at Jerusalem receives the support of the apostles (48), but after he starts home, publicly preaching the conversion of Gentiles, Christian Pharisees object and a public hearing is demanded. 48.

Reaching Antioch Paul learns that Galatia is being affected by the Judaizing influence and writes Galatians while still warm with the intensity of the controversy. 48.

In the meantime the public Council at Jerusalem upholds Paul and sends the Apostolic Decree by Silas. 48.

A contribution meanwhile is sent by the Antioch church to Judaean brethren, perhaps by Paul and Barnabas, delivered to the elders. 48-49.

After an interval Paul chooses Silas and starts on his second journey, beginning with the Cilician churches and going on into Galatia, publishing the Decree, but showing how the rule of love leads one to do "all things to save some" by circumcising Timothy to establish good feeling. 50 ff.

What suppositions does this involve?

Peter's visit to Antioch in Gal. 2:10 is not in chronological order.

The Antioch gift and Cornelius incident of Acts, chap. 11, are not in the proper historical setting.

The Acts account of the Council at Jerusalem is a confusion of a private conference and a public hearing shortly afterward at which Paul and Barnabas were probably not present.

What questions does the later date of Galatians leave unsettled which the earlier date settles?

1. Why does Paul omit the trip to Jerusalem with the Antioch gift?
2. Why does not Paul mention the Apostolic Decree?
3. Why does not Paul defend the circumcision of Timothy?
4. Why is there no mention of Timothy or Silas?

These questions are absolutely unanswerable if Galatians were written after the second journey, and either Paul or Acts must be discredited. If Paul is to be discredited here, how can we tell what is to be regarded as dependable? If Acts is to be discredited here, then it is useless to try to determine any chronology upon its data. Is it not better to seek an explanation which may seem possible, notwithstanding the fact that there is no method of decisive demonstration?

FAITH: NEW AND OLD

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I

Faith, some men say, is out of fashion; science has pre-empted the field. Science transacts the business of the world—naturally, for science has ample qualifications for the task. Science has shop windows, on which are emblazoned, as on the Chinese signboards, "No cheating here"; science can display its wares with valid assur-

ance that the goods will be delivered; science can enter upon the day's work without temerity, for by set of sun a definite "so much" will be accomplished; science can guarantee prompt service; science can anticipate the exigency;

Faith is a fine invention
For gentlemen who see;
But microscopes are prudent
In an emergency.